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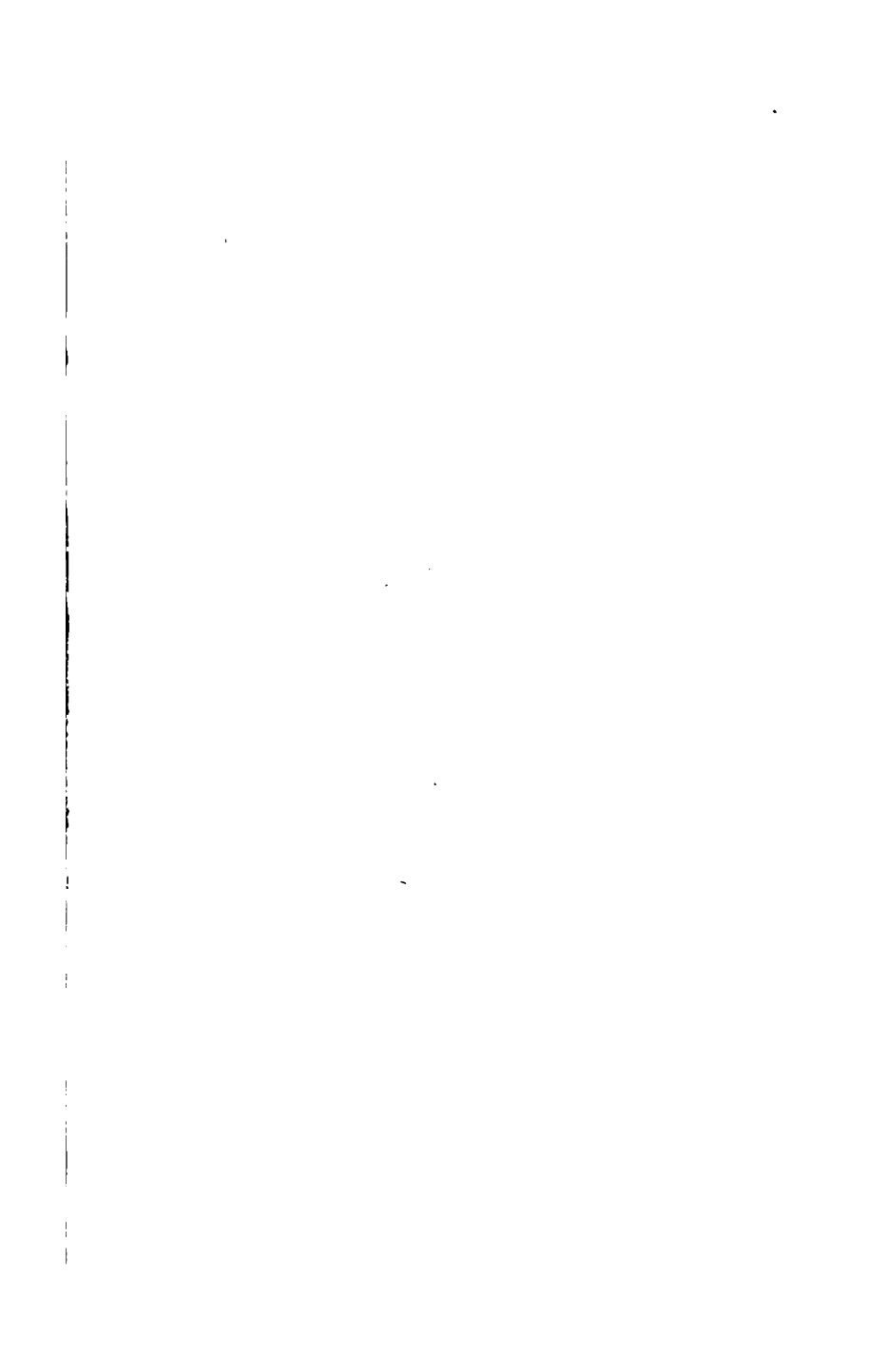
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LETTERS  
TO  
AN UNDERGRADUATE

48.750.





**LETTERS**  
**TO AN**  
**UNDERGRADUATE OF OXFORD**

**BY THE**  
**REV. CHARLES CLARKE,**

**CURATE OF NORTON BY DAVENTRY.**



**LONDON:**  
**JOSEPH CUNDALL, 12, OLD BOND STREET.**  
**1848.**





## INTRODUCTION.

READER,



CLAIM no credit for these Letters on the score of originality: the thoughts, diffused through various sources, have long been the property of the world, the subject-matter of common consideration with all connected with the universities, by themselves or their families: compiled,



they have become the property of the author ; who takes the opportunity of offering them in their present shape for the reconsideration of his friends.

As it is the duty of every man to make even his leisure subservient to the interest or happiness of his fellow creatures, in however trifling a degree ; may I hope that my amusement is your profit ; and that the pleasure I have had in putting together the accompanying letters, may be equalled by any advantage to be derived from their perusal.

It is easier to raise, than to decide

a question. I do not enter the field as a disputant on any point connected with university discipline—neither the form of a Letter, nor the style of writing, is adapted for that purpose. Those who best know the system of Oxford and Cambridge will see the injustice of too violent attacks upon the tradesmen or the authorities of our universities; the real evil lies in natural causes, viz. the thoughtlessness and passions of youth, increased by facility of gratification, and the too easy blindness of parents to the faults of their own children; and though a more stringent guardianship may lop the branches, and prevent the present show of fruit, in

the precincts of the university, the blossom will not be less abundant in other soils, whilst the roots remain the same.

Every gentleman of the present day is presumed to be a scholar; that the presumption may extend to the converse, and every scholar be presumed to be a gentleman is the sincere wish of

READER,

Your obedient Servant,

C. C.



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## LETTERS TO AN UNDER-GRADUATE.

### I.

#### ON THE CHOICE OF ACQUAINTANCE.

MY DEAR ——

**W**HILST whole years would physically be required to develop your character, in its passage from one stage to another, under ordinary circumstances ; you have passed now, by a journey from home to the university, at one step, from boyhood to manhood. You were an Eton boy, you are now an Oxford man. This is not merely in name, for every circum-

stance around you has changed with your denomination. You have committed your last *freak* ; for freaks will now be follies, and your follies will be grave errors in judgment, or something worse. You are a responsible being ; responsible not only to your tutors, but responsible to the world and yourself, for every action, deliberate or the reverse. Impulses are peculiarly the property of school-boys, judgment the distinguishing feature of the man. That a transition so sudden, from one place to another, should give you that which you are supposed by your name to possess, is absurd :

“ Cœlum non animum mutant qui trans mare  
“ currunt.”

It is for this reason my anxious wish that you should enter upon this little world of probation with all the experience in my power to bestow. Experience is best bought, but it may be bought too dearly.

Yet you must not be frightened by this foreshadowing of something grave. You will find, I trust, "sermons in every thing;" why not in the letters of your faithful friend?

"Ridentem dicere verum

"Quid vetat? *ut pueris olim dant crustula blandi*

"Doctores, elementa velint ut discere prima."

HOR. SAT. I. i. 25.

The world, on which you are about to enter, is governed by a code of laws, customs and manners peculiar to itself; and, like those of the Medes and Persians, they alter not. Centuries roll on; what was wrong in the universe at one time, has become right, or vice versa; but it is not so at the university. What adds much to this want of deviation from the beaten track is the want of that

"Varium et mutabile semper

"Fœmina."

The fact is, that in other places woman



exerts a vast influence over fashion and habit ; and man is ever more or less controlled by her. Oxford, you will find essentially masculine ; and on that account alone essentially disagreeable ; for, living in society, you have already acquired a habit of referring certain feelings to the influence of female connections ; and if you do not feel the want of it now, you are without that refinement for which your friends give you credit. Having acquired, endeavour to retain, at least one female friend and correspondent in this life : your mother is the best, as long as you are permitted to retain her.

You will find the fellows of your college, men of habit, of routine, without inclination to change the customs of centuries. Your companions are of too little influence to do more than adopt the line of life their predecessors have left to them. There has been for hundreds of years the

morning lecture, (less strictly attended to formerly,) the afternoon's ride to Bullington, the drive to Bicester, or the walk up Heddington hill; the evening's potation of port, and the grilled bones and sherry; or the midnight lamp and dressing gown of later hours. And so little has any change been wrought in the habits of our alma mater, that even inebriety is sometimes heard of when elsewhere it is a tale of olden times: at university banquets and messroom carouses only, is the old Horatian distich believed:

“ Narratur et prisce Catonis  
Sæpe mero caluisse virtus.”

HOR. lib. iii. Ode 21.

If he was what he was under the occasional stimulus of the rich Falernian, what would he not have been without it?

One of the most important considerations for you will be the choice of acquaintance: and in a place where sympathy and

interest is less general, you may perhaps find individual friendships of more rapid and genial growth. Recollect that you cannot count upon your school-room associations as consistent with your present change. You must look for other and higher qualifications in those who are likely to accompany you through life. In this, as in everything else, there is a Scylla and Charybdis; it is the part of experience to steer between them.

You have already heard of *tufthunting*; a thing spoken of with contempt by all, but above all by those who practise it unsuccessfully; it is a thing inconsistent with a generous or noble disposition. Never therefore sacrifice even a prejudice, save upon conviction, for the acquisition of an acquaintance of higher rank than yourself; need I add, a principle, for the pleasure of riding with a nobleman or "dining" with a Christchurch gentleman commoner.

But there is a great difference between a love of the best society, arising out of a certain refinement of mind, in some innate, in others acquired, and an unworthy means of seeking it. Take care, then, my dear ——, not to be deterred from seeking such companionship as shall be agreeable to your condition in life, or even profitable to your worldly interests, by a species of false modesty. By worthy means, it is a positive duty to endeavour to rise in the social scale; and it might be of service to enquire how intimately connected is the feeling with a proper emulation: whilst nothing can be more contemptible than a fawning adulation of rank, at once humiliating to both parties; nothing is more ridiculous than to be frightened from the arm of some estimable acquaintance of high station, by the whispers of unsuccessful competition for the same honour.

Tufthunting is not the only rock on

which men split : there is another. The ambition which in one man develops itself in creeping up the sleeve of rank, is exhibited in another in a wish to preside over those beneath his condition in life. Do not imagine that it has anything more to recommend it. To put up with the pleasures or conversation of those whom we feel to be beneath us, for the sake of being " Sir Oracle " is pitiful in the extreme. Avoid the intimate acquaintance of those whom you have reason to believe are not your equals, unless the deficiency be counterbalanced by some excellence of disposition or of intellect, to recommend them : and even then be careful, for as you have not yet the power to raise them to your level by patronage, or to introduce them to your proper *set*, when a movement takes place it must be downwards to them. When you read the story of the late amiable Duke of York escorting some

poor and humbly born, but deserving officer through the ranks of a crack corps, remember who it was that ventured upon such a step; one less exalted would have done his poor friend no good, and might have done himself irretrievable damage.

Above all things, never allow yourself to be under an obligation to any inferior. Pay, and pay honestly all horse-dealers, stage-coachmen, steeple-chase-riders, "et hoc genus omne;" and then these modern "mimi et balatrones" need never disgrace your table or be seen in your company. If you must be silly enough to drive tandems, ride steeple-chases, make a book, or run a horse, keep the professionals in their place: pay for your whistle, and avoid as a plague any intercourse with Jem this or Tom that, save strictly on matters of business. "Coaching" was the fashion in my day; the driving four horses was the most innocent part of the performance.

Kindness of disposition is *nearly* an essential of the true "gentleman." It will be necessary for you in casting your school-boy skin to get rid of much that clung to it; need I tell you that such changes should be made with tact and feeling. Never cut any body who has not insulted you (this is contrary to Oxford etiquette, where you should cut everybody you want to know) for a bow can be made to express the deepest reverence or the most unmitigated contempt. Studied politeness is out of place where you are, but temper your coldness when coldness is necessary, that it come like the wind to the shorn lamb. On moral grounds old Isaac Walton is worth a volume—"A companion that is cheerful, and free from swearing and scurrilous discourse, is worth gold. I love such mirth as does not make friends ashamed to look upon each other next morning: nor men that cannot well bear

it, to repent the money they spend when they be warmed with drink. And I take this for a rule: you may pick out such time and such companions that you may make yourself merrier for a little than a great deal of money; for 'tis the company and not the charge that makes the feast.

I am, My dear ——

Yours most affectionately,

C. C.





## LETTER II.

### ON THE ADVANTAGES OF A CLASSICAL EDUCATION, AND A METHOD OF READING SUGGESTED.

MY DEAR —

**Y**OU are at a time of life, when the advantages of a good education can scarcely be well appreciated; for it is from the results that you are to derive the substantial benefit. Unlike the body, which receives present pleasure as well as permanent profit from a wholesome nourishment; the mind rejects as medicine, in its early stage, the food on which

it is to strengthen itself: and it is not until you perceive somewhat of its advantages, that you will begin to imbibe the nutritious draughts of science with any great sensation of pleasure.

But you are peculiarly fortunate, nor can you be too grateful to your parents for the classical education which awaits you in a university. Much abuse has been lavished of late years upon our academic system: fifty times perhaps it has occurred to you, when puzzling over a cramped passage of one of Thucydides's speeches, that it was almost a useless labour; that modern history, and modern languages were more serviceable matter, and of more agreeable form: but you are now in a city, where your feelings and sense will be appealed to most strongly in opposition to such a notion. A university education seeks not to inculcate facts, but principles; not only to invigorate the

memory, and store up matter for conversational argument or political debate ; but to give order and stability to the judgment ; and, by employing your imagination upon a more distant and severer school than that of your own time and country, to keep it within due bounds. You will now find every incentive to classical learning. The conveniences and opportunities for study are ample. The genius loci will exert its influence with you ; will make you look with reverence upon the strong holds of ancient lore : every spot is hallowed by some sacred legend of Newton, Hooker, Addison ; and every gale whispers to you of those mighty ancients. The perspicuous elegance of Tully, the powerful conciseness of Thucydides, the genius of Homer, and the happy wisdom of Plato, invite you to a perusal of their writings ; while centuries have ratified the excellence of our acade-

mical system, by a strict imitation of their predecessors.

But classical learning will do more than make you a gentleman and a scholar; for it will give you a practical advantage in society. Its close and formal grammar will render easy the accomplishment of modern languages. The elegance of its best writers in Greek and Latin, will be a splendid model for historical or epistolary composition, or for parliamentary eloquence. And though this may be acquired by a study of our best authors, still, who would not rather prefer to paint from an original picture than from a copy, however faithful. The knowledge of ancient institutions and facts too, will give you the power of comparison with more modern times, and enable you to make deductions, which will perhaps outweigh the nicest discrimination and clearest judgment of one, only conversant with the literature

and history of the day. Study then, my dear ——, with assiduity, the writings of those more than mortal men ; and shew us that advantages, so coveted by many, have not been misplaced in you.

There are two descriptions of persons who may be said to enjoy *a long life*—the wise and reflecting being who is employing rationally every moment, and the fool who is constantly wishing that his time were shorter ; endeavour to make your days full days by the former method. Reading must occupy a very serious portion of your time. In a university it should be your chief object ; and though recreation is as necessary there, and especially at your time of life, as elsewhere, recreation presupposes a more than ordinary amount of labour. But it is not so much by the quantity, as by the quality and the application of your reading, that you are to be benefited. There is a de-

defultory way of wandering from book to book, and from subject to subject, which collects facts, it is true, but gives no inducement to reason upon them. The object of study should be the orderly employment of our thoughts on what we read ; if therefore our reading be thus defultory, our manner of thinking must of necessity be without order, and undetermined. The bee wanders from flower to flower, but gathers the same sort of sweet from each, and employs it on the same end ; but it cannot be so with books. If the gratification of reading is to consist in the mere act, then take to your easy chair, with half a dozen entertaining authors on either side, and run through them with a rabid impatience for the catastrophe ; but if, as I apprehend, the real pleasure consists in the reflections which arise, I would advise a great attention to the quality of your subject. Thus,

be careful to present yourself a constant attendant on the College lectures; fashion is against me, for the most regular attendants choose to think that they might have employed the time to more advantage. I think not; there is the order and regularity; no mean apology for them; and the ready assistance of your Tutor, whose interests are more kindly bound up in you sometimes, than you would fain imagine.

It has been remarked that reading is to the mind, what exercise is to the body: but exercise to the body, if taken constantly with a view only to health, becomes irksome and disagreeable. Reading, if constantly entered upon only with a view to reflection and improvement, palls upon the student, and fails of its object entirely. There is however much reading, which, without being entered upon with that definite object, will still be found to gain

it: just as exercise taken without any particular view at the moment, induces a corresponding vigour of the frame. Of such a kind is much light reading, and for which our age is so justly celebrated.

You will be surprised that I recommend to you the occasional perusal of a good novel: but I think that you may read with much advantage, what the learning and intelligence of a Scott has written with so great care. While releasing your mind from severer studies it will rouse your curiosity; a faculty of great importance to keep in vigour, and which Hobbes imagines to be an original passion of the mind. Your youthful criticism too will be exerted with more justice upon subjects of daily life, or constant recurrence; than on such as demand a certain degree of faith in the learning of others. As novels are written now-a-days there is much real learning in them; and a first class man



of my own College told me that he was much indebted to them for his knowledge of the sciences. Perhaps not one man out of a hundred has discrimination or power, to select and reflect upon the parts of real merit; I do not therefore recommend their perusal to you with this view; but as an agreeable and permissible change from serious studies, taking care that they never interfere with hours which should be devoted to things of more importance.

I am, My dear ——,

Yours most affectionately,

C. C.



### LETTER III.

#### ON DRESS AND APPEARANCE.

MY DEAR ——,

**I** WAS much amused the other day with reading some old prohibitions of the reign of Elizabeth on extravagance in dress. There is an extravagance of mode which I think equally censurable with extravagance of means. Indeed the latter of these merely amounts to a question of political economy as to the right one has to ruin oneself; the former I take to be a positive insult to

society, and injurious to public interests. In former days the payment of a certain sum, or assessment at a certain rate, gave a title to a particular expenditure on the adornment of the person, and many a noble was content in the Court of our admiration-loving monarch to allow himself to be assessed at something far beyond his real fortune, for the pleasure of gratifying the Queen by a splendid appearance, just as a great merchant or banker would prefer to make a false return to the income Tax, rather than proclaim his unsuspected lack of business. A sword in later times marked the gentleman; but now-a-days the lion's hide of modish extravagance, effectually conceals the rank, poverty, or low condition of the ass within. Even my lord Clearwell may be seen in *pea-coat* of such extravagant shape, as is only to be equalled by its rival on the back of some emancipated hair-dresser. In this

case, a word on dress and appearance generally will not be considered out of season, though I have no reason in the world for supposing that you, of all men, are likely to need it on that particular.

Your Oxford brethren have always had the credit of dressing well; but this is only a comparative merit, and I regret to say it arises from a comparison of no very high standard. As in every thing else, there will in dress be an excess and a deficiency. To which you are most prone, I do not pretend to form an opinion. I only endeavour to steer you between them both. Has it once occurred to you that dress is as much the index of the mind as is the face? It should be more so: for in the formation of our features we have no hand, though I admit much interest; our externals are on the contrary our own, and if your tailor or bootmaker represent you under false co-

lours, you are to blame. A crooked nose, or a squint, may exist without a corresponding obliquity of mind; but a badly tied neckcloth, or an improperly buttoned waistcoat, indicates some negligence or tortuosity of disposition. If propriety in this respect is not valued, it should never be despised. Depend upon it there is a certain appearance of the body to which the fashion of the mind contributes. The peacock is not an emblem of humility, when he spreads his handsome feathers in the sun; and I cannot but attribute to our sex some of the weakness of the gentler kind, when I see the ornaments of the two sexes on one body; as I am inclined to give that lady credit for a little too much of the man in her composition, who *prefers* her hat and riding whip, to a pretty bonnet and a parasol.

“Simplex munditiis” should be a com-

plete gentleman's direction for the toilette. To be always looking as well as you can look, my dear ——, is one thing; to have some care how you look, is another. And as your character can be known only to a few, and you must be seen of many, you should remember that your letter of recommendation to the world is your external manner and appearance. You will see the truth of this, when you think that it would be of infinite interest to a gay spendthrift to appear before his old maiden Aunt, with some sobriety of speech and dress; and that Simon Pure would advance his concerns in this world, in the eyes of his foxhunting uncle by adopting a little more of its conventionalities. I do not ask you to imitate this deception; let there be no necessity for it, by appearing always what you have been bred, a gentleman: as far from the extravagance of foppery on the one hand,

only needful for pretenders, as from the vanity of negligence and disregard of personal elegance on the other.

My friend Dr. —, Canon of Christ Church, with odd prebendal stalls here and there, and a living or two, always has been the neatest man alive. A perfect halo of cleanliness furrounds him. The whiteness of his hands, his teeth, and his linen, dispense a perfect atmosphere of propriety. His clothes are those of a gentleman, as well as a Divine. Yet he was a double first class man. Some would scarcely have believed it possible with such external polish, but it was the fact. His mind is of the same modern fashion with his body. He manages to converse upon ordinary subjects of interest with ordinary propriety. He is as "journalier" as the completest man of fashion. All is grift that comes to his mill; the last ball or the last Bishopric; but none of his

friends doubt the *profundity* of his learning ; every one is sure of the elegance of his scholarship.

A landscape takes the colour of the atmosphere through which it is seen, and the mind will assume to a certain extent the properties of that external atmosphere through which it is regarded. It does this justly : and when the appearance leads to a wrong conclusion on the subject of its real qualities, it must be accounted as a moral *lufus naturæ*.

My friend Mr. —, fellow of Oriel, is a man of much learning, incredible research, and great piety ; but his personal appearance makes us regret that the casket is not more worthy of the jewel. A stranger, that is, about nine hundred and ninety out of every thousand, sets him down for a sloven and a misanthrope, and can scarcely be expected to give him credit for the elegance of mind and scho-



larship, he so studiously conceals. The world judges him hardly. Nothing but his wonderful qualities have made him what he is, and he is now only half what he might have been, with a third of his talents, and a double portion of cleanliness and decorum.

It is not necessary to throw up the "gentleman" for the sake of assuming "the scholar." If you are really learned, you will be ten times as useful with a decorous manner and dress; if you are a blockhead, it will be needless to become a "flover" too. A moderately well written book is often found useful and ornamental in a library in a clean and appropriate binding; from which much learning is discarded, or escapes neglected, from its dusky and disreputable exterior.

Propriety of costume would lead into a discussion too long for a letter: but

remember it is everything. You know, my dear ——, the difference between the head of a College, the dignified Don, the respectable Rector, an officer of the guards, and an undergraduate of ——. They may all be equally well dressed in different styles, and would be (three of them at least) execrably habited in the same. Simplicity should be your guide : for you may venture to extend to your dress, what your friends trust will be the leading principle of your mind. Avoid the little faults of men of real merit, and imitate the little excellencies of those who have no great ones to recommend them.

“ *Munditiæ placeant : fuscetur corpora campo :*

*Sit bene conveniens, et sine labe, toga.*

*Linguaque nec rigeat : careant rubigine dentes,*

*Nec vagus in laxâ pes tibi pelle natet.*

*Nec mala deformet rigidos tonsura capillos :*

*Sit coma, sit doctâ barba resecta manu.*

*Forma Dei munus.” \* \* \* \* \**

OVID. *Art. Lib. i. iii.*

Take the advice of the poet ; and never believe that great qualities make up for the want of things less desirable ; you may suffer from the indiscretion more severely than you imagine.

Believe me, My dear ——,

Yours most affectionately,

C. C.



## LETTER IV.

### ON TIME.

MY DEAR —,

**A**S the proper use of your time will render valuable every blessing, it is not wonderful that I should feel anxious to write you a few lines on so important a subject: and I mean not only on the time which is to be employed in the peculiar objects of a university education; but even that portion of it which must necessarily be given to healthful enjoyments, and social recreations. The time which you now enjoy is that on

which your employment of it will exercise the greatest influence. Like the fruits of the Earth, it is most important that the mind as it reaches maturity, should be most beneficially acted upon. When once called into action, when it ceases to be as it were in "*statu pupillari*," there will be fewer opportunities of improving it. Yours will, I trust, be a life employed actively in the service of your fellow creatures, and at no distant period. You should now be preparing your muscles for this vigorous performance, by due exercise, or, whilst you are growing to maturity your contemporaries will be acting, and you will thus be ever a stage in the rear of your companions.

If I begin by offering you a few hints on reading, it is because that is the main object of your present residence in Oxford.

Although great learning cannot be acquired without great study, yet the most

learned are not always the most studious. The efficacy of intense application to books, during ten or even eight hours a day, I hold to be a fallacy, as often proved by the failure of its advocates, as by the success of the apparently less studious. For as food requires a given time for digestion, and as it is necessary again for the stomach to be at rest; so it is equally requisite that the mind should have time to ponder on what it has acquired, and should have some hours of positive relaxation. There is only this want of analogy between the two, that the stomach must rest, whilst the mind, never entirely resting, must be diverted. How is it possible, then, to read so many hours, and yet to meditate profitably on what you have read? The longer the time of study, the greater must be the labour of thought, and the labour of thought is very different from the pleasures of musing.

My friend Fitzdullard was a man of moderate capacity, sufficient with well directed application to have compassed most of the objects of ambition in a university education. But eight hours a day was too much for him ; for he was unable to digest the quantity of mental food ; active recreation was out of character for a reading man, so he pondered and mused, and took a third class instead of a first. But the misfortune is that he still keeps up a sort of spurious reputation for learning, by becoming a dreamer. Books he abhors : but it would never do to forego the character of that which he tried so hard to become.

Steady, the rector of our parish, on the other hand, with no more ability than Fitzdullard, read only half the time ; but he did so with perseverance and discrimination ; he thought over what he

read for an equal period of time; and employed some hours each day in active amusement, riding or walking, and with constant change of society. He not only got a good second class, but encouraged by success to pursue his learning in the same manner, is a useful and agreeable member of the best society in the country.

The art of study and the labour of thought require solitude; a relaxation from them should therefore consist in a cultivation of agreeable companionship, and there is scarcely any conversation, however light or humorous, which will not elicit some undiscovered sparks, or induce new and pleasing considerations.

You know, my dear ——, the pleasure it will give those who have your real interests at heart, to have you a really active member of society: whatever your profession, the Church, the Bar, the Senate, let your present education not be the



end, but the means. The great mistake made by Oxford and Cambridge men *generally* is that, having attained the object of a university ambition, they have nothing more to do. Pray recollect that the time now employed is to fit you for a more extended sphere of duty; begin life, when some think that they are ending it. To do this it is difficult to give particular rules. The capacities of men differ so materially, their tastes, and powers of endurance are so various. But allowing you the ordinary share of these excellencies, I shall scarcely be wrong in telling you that it is not the quantity but the quality of application with which you study that is to ensure success: and one of the most important ingredients in quality is "consistency, a steadiness of purpose." I mean an undeviating determination, (even though you fix upon only three or four hours a day for your study)

not to be interrupted by any proposal of pleasure. If from the commencement of your career you resolutely shut your ears and door to the voice of the charmer, until your four hours of reading are accomplished; (and this independently of your college lectures) a meaner capacity than yours may hope for every reasonable honour. But you must be firm in this: you must do so during vacation as well as term time: and whilst you see men failing who have sacrificed their health to a few months of *cramming*, you will have time for thought and meditation, and at least an equal portion for amusement and relaxation. It is the want of determination to do something *every day* that produces such signal failures in otherwise studious men. I do not underrate the difficulties of temptation; a drive, a ride, a day's hunting, a new novel, a breakfast, or a supper, a new friend, an old acquaintance,

a head ache, are severe tormentors of such resolutions; but break the charm once, and you do not know how soon you may become an idler. Never touch your capital, old Gripe used to say; for you begin by selling out hundreds, and at last have little compunction about the thousands, until all is swallowed up. So it is with other things. One day—what does it signify? Careless wants you to go to Newnham. You can read double to-morrow; or when you come home at night; but at night it can be done to-morrow, and to-morrow, just as you are beginning, your old schoolfellow Luckless has bought a new horse, and wants you to ride with him. In fact only once break through the principle, and you stand a great chance of at length leaving it off altogether. And then after idling for two years and six months, you will be stuffed by some hard-working out

College Tutor, and go into the Schools for your degree, with the knowledge of a parrot and the spirits of a mouse. Happy if you blunder through the examination with the many: disgusted with books, the charms of which are unknown to you; You leave the university incapacitated by habit for the respectable labours of a Country Clergyman: and by ignorance for the severer requirements of the senate or the bar.

Amusement as relaxation is not only a justifiable, but a valuable use of time, but there are one or two considerations of much consequence in this part of my letter. First, recreation of any kind presupposes a certain amount of labour, for this is the real difference between relaxation and dissipation. Dissipation is the constant recurrence of amusements, by which the mind becomes enervated and unfitted for study. Relaxation is the un-

bending of the mind from its strain, and by which it is invigorated and refitted for a return to its natural habit of study. It must therefore be taken up in such a manner that it can be laid aside at any moment: instead of exhausting, it should refresh the plant. Again, all recreation is relative, relative to time, to habit, to rank, to fortune, and it ceases to be valuable in just the proportion that it ceases to be subservient to these. Amusements which occupy too much time, or present themselves at wrong times, are injurious. Those which contradict the previous habits of a person are unavailable to him; and cease to be any relaxation at all. The offer of a mount with that excellent sportsman Mr. Drake, would present but a melancholy prospect to our friend —, whose notions of horsemanship are purely theoretical; whilst his occupation of collecting geological specimens on Hedding-

ton Hill would be as little a relaxation to you perhaps. Even at a university what may well become the rank and fortune of a nobleman, or a gentleman commoner of Christ Church, would clearly be preposterous in a poor man's son; and though amusing enough in the case of the latter, it would be an amusement of which I am far from approving. But I am trespassing too much on the time which I have been recommending as so valuable; and shall therefore reserve for another letter a little history, illustrative of the truth of these remarks.

Believe me, my dear ——,

Yours most affectionately,

C. C.



## LETTER V.

### ON THE CHOICE OF RECREATION.

MY DEAR —,

**Y**OU will be surprized to find that a motive exists in the minds of many parents for sending their sons to the university, so different from what you suspect. Perhaps one half of the men of middling rank and fortune are placed there mainly in the hope of making acquaintances, which shall benefit them hereafter. Whether it be a real benefit to look upon your father and mother, as well bred, respectable people

enough, but not such as you would like to introduce to your companions, is a question. My object now is to point out how signally it fails of its object, at least nine times out of ten. It rarely, if ever, answers. The Johnfons and Thompfons may for a while play their parts in your circumscribed world, as the companions of a Howard or a Russell, but their walks in life are by nature too widely asunder, for the association to extend beyond their college years. Indeed the mischief seldom ends in mere disappointment, for the companionship too often ends in the wreck of the weaker vessel, in endeavouring to brave the waves and storms in which the nobler frigate has lived.

How well I remember poor Maynard, Anthony Maynard, and lord Castleford. We were all schoolfellows. Castleford and Maynard were always together: both handsome, clever fellows, with similar



tastes and dispositions : if they could have remained schoolboys all their life, of course nothing could have been more profitable than such a companionship. However, lord Castleford was to go to Christ Church; and as Maynard's mother was an ambitious but weak woman, she fancied she saw great advantages to her son from the continuance of his schoolboy friendship, and entered him there too. She could ill afford even the requisite expenses of a college life: for Maynard's father had been unfortunate, as a merchant, before his death, and left his widow and three children, but moderately provided for. At Christ Church Maynard felt no difference, for lord Castleford was really attached to him; so he rode and walked, and wine and smoked, and hunted and played whist with Castleford and his set: and his mother was only prouder of a longer list of fashionable and extra-

vagant acquaintances for her son. Hunting was nothing to lord Castleford: he could afford it; and only looked upon it as an amusement of which he was to be a partaker for the rest of his life. Half guinea points were an innocent recreation, even a desirable relaxation on the part of Castleford and his friends: but it was death to poor Maynard, whose questionable position could only be kept up by joining in the amusements of his friends. He had nothing to look to but some nobleman's patronage now for a livelihood; for he was already deeply in debt, and had lost all the favourable opportunities of getting a fellowship, or pushing himself in a legitimate manner. Yet such was his infatuation; so deeply imbued was he with the impression that he was to make a figure in the world by the assistance of his schoolfellow and companion, that he clung the more tenaciously

to his system, the nearer their separation approached. Well! lord Castleford was to leave Christ Church, and Anthony Maynard took a degree. They left college; and then came the fate of almost all such friendships. Castleford went into the great world, was returned for a borough, and later, for his county; hunted on during the winter, and played his rubber at higher points than ever; married; is a most excellent magistrate; and country gentleman; dispenses his ample fortune liberally; and will be a shining light in the upper House whenever he is called there. For a year or two he always shook hands warmly with Maynard, when he met him during the season; walked with him once down Piccadilly, asked about his prospects; wondered he never met him at Lady P——'s, or the Duchess of D——'s; and at the end of four years, during which he saw him

about as many times, forgot that Anthony Maynard was waiting for preferment in the Church.

Maynard, on the contrary, after taking a moderate degree, passed into his mother's world ; where he was the admired of respectable dinner tables, and not unpretending ball rooms : not the less so, as the friend of a nobleman whom he now never saw, or passed with a quiet smile of recognition. He was miserably hampered with debts, awed by the voice of his own conscience, and the upbraidings of his mother for not having turned his excellent chances to a better account : and after being wretched as a country Curate upon a hundred a year, for ten years, he has at length removed himself from all expectation of advancement, by accepting two hundred a year with a colonial chaplaincy. His mother, poor soul ! goes on telling every body what his expectations

were, and adding certain obscure hints about a living lately vacant in Lord Castleford's gift, but which has been given, very naturally, to an honourable cousin of his Lordship's, almost as much in want of it as Anthony Maynard.

Now, my dear ——, you will see, where you are, a hundred such cases as this: and it is strange that with all their experience, people will not learn the absurdity of sending young men of the middle rank to college to form high acquaintances. That those of equal birth and fortune should form connections there, and keep them, is all right; but that the rich and the poor should do so without material damage to the character and position of the latter, excepting in rare instances, is not to be expected. But it is not this, that I was so anxious to point out, as the necessity of regulating your amusements according to your means.

In the career of my old acquaintances, the recreation of the one could not be justified in the case of the other. The same may be said of temperament; that is an innocent recreation in some men which leads in others to the most fearful consequences. Hunting to a young man of good fortune and a certain position in his county, is even desirable, as introducing him to his neighbours in a favourable light; but to one intended for a staid profession, and of only moderate means, it is a censurable extravagance. Though how far any such pursuits may be obnoxious to college discipline is another matter, and not contemplated in my remarks upon the subject. By regarding all the occupations of those of your own age thus, you may render profitable every enjoyment; whilst amusements, in the abstract innocent, will become immediately censurable, if allowed to usurp any

50 CHOICE OF RECREATION.

undue influence over your time, your thoughts, or your fortune. That such may not be the case is the sincere wish of

My dear ——,

Yours most affectionately

C. C.



## LETTER VI.

### ON THE SUBJECT OF DEBT.

MY DEAR —,

**T**HERE are many rocks on which youth splits, some more, some less to be apprehended; but not one more so than debt. “Getting into debt” is an expression implying difficulty; the fact is, that it literally courts you, where you now are. Every temptation to it is offered you. The facility of doing so, is no where so great as in our universities: for not only the example of others, and your own youth and inexperience induce



you ; but you are snared by the apparent carelessness of tradesmen in giving credit, and even wooed by their anxiety for the honour of your name upon their books. Avoid it as a plague spot ; the danger of which increases as rapidly as it spreads. The consequences of it are so numerous, and so fearful, that they far exceed the bounds of a letter ; a few of them we may enter into, in the hopes of saving a naturally generous mind from too common a calamity.

Without saying much to you on the subject of the natural inconveniences, nay miseries in many cases, attendant upon debt, which cling to after life, and involve innocent persons in the consequence of your imprudence ; you will necessarily lose one of the characteristics of a gentleman, by over-stepping your income. Without real independence of mind, you will be unable to act worthily the part

you have to play in this world. If dependent upon the caprices of others, for some place which your improvidence has rendered necessary for your maintenance, how will you be able to support the true dignity of an English gentleman? And yet this is one of the least dishonourable situations into which a man may fall by early extravagance. And if dependence upon those, who ought to be only your equals, shall leave so severe a sting; what must be your feelings at a sense of obligation to those whom you ought to consider your inferiors? To call them so would be a farce: for they hold in their hands a power you dare not provoke: and pecuniary obligation has made your creditors your superiors.

Nor is this all; the daily annoyances to which you will be subject, will soon destroy your self-esteem, with that of your most valuable friends: the labourer who

spends only his twelve shillings a week will be above you: and though the world will be lenient enough not to use harsh language, your own conscience will proclaim you a dishonest man. Instead of enjoying the privilege which your Maker has given you of an erect presence, looking your fellow creatures boldly in the face: you will skulk with downcast eyes and doubtful look along the thoroughfares which contain your creditors; in every whisper you will hear a condemnatory voice; in every friendly hand you will fear a bailiff. Independently of this, the actual inconveniences of extravagance are inconceivable. An opportunity of forwarding your fortune or position occurs: you are unable to take advantage of it from the pressure of your creditors; and when you do make your fortune, you are obliged to let your interest dictate what should have been

done only at the voice of principle. Poor Brown was arrested as he went to take possession of a Tutorship to a nobleman, (of £400 per annum ; a sum which would have placed him above want for life,) and for which he was eminently qualified ; the situation was given away before his release ; nor could he be considered eligible after such a misfortune.

In fact university history teems with examples of this kind ; and many in their old age have had to lament the heart-rending misery of themselves and their families, arising from the want of power to say “ no.” Neglect to say that little word when you ought ; you will be unable to say it when you would.

Now, my dear ——, if I call your attention to this subject, believe me, it is with the greatest anxiety for your welfare. Impressed with the truth of what I say, I may be tedious, but I am sincere. Let

nothing induce you to break through the rule you have laid down for yourself, of paying ready money for every thing. I know your difficulties; admiration for a time will follow your unreal liberality; but those who profit by it, will be the first to turn their backs upon you in difficulty. Enjoy all the amusements which your age, and position authorize, but enquire first whether you have the money to pay for them. If you want a horse, a coat, a breakfast party, do not order them, because they can be paid for next term, or at Christmas, or that day twelvemonth. Give them up until you can afford such an indulgence. You will not be courted, perhaps, certainly not flattered or fed upon; but you will be admired, sometimes even by those who affect to despise you; certainly by those who wish you well. You will not make a great figure amongst your companions; but you will have

avoided a great evil, upon which so many split. I will not torment you with the stories of those who have ruined themselves by the system of credit so disgraceful to our universities, may you never experience its sad effects. Much has been written on the subject; but it is a most difficult one. The law appears to me to protect the debtor quite sufficiently; but what amount of vigilance on the part of College Authorities should be used to protect the creditor is another question. It is as little in the power of a College Tutor to dictate to a creditor how far he shall trust, as it is to dictate to a person of full age how much he shall spend. The only legitimate means, would be to make the laws of the College of such a nature, that the university would, I fear, become tenantless of gentlemen of birth or fortune.

In closing my letter, only regard this

piece of advice. Make your Parents under all circumstances your friends. If you have once encroached, if you have exceeded your allowance, your true course consists in a candid confession, and an endeavour to retrieve. I am convinced that there are many involved in inextricable difficulty by neglecting this. In debt to a certain amount, they go on and on with a full intention of retrieving; but the facility of obtaining supplies from dishonourable sources, and the fear of offending a kind but prudent father, keeps them from putting their resolution into effect; until the burden becomes so heavy, as to be beyond the ordinary resources of a moderate income. You are liable to error, it is bad to have committed yourself; but it is worse to refuse to acknowledge it. Who is likely to befriend you so effectually as your own parents? who should be your real friend,

if they are not? Sooner or later it must be known. Make the confession at once of your first false step: and let the shame of having to do so, keep you from taking the second. With every wish for your happiness.

Believe me, my dear ——,

Yours most affectionately

C. C.






## LETTER VII.

### ON THE ETIQUETTE OF OUR UNIVER- SITIES, COMPARED WITH THAT OF SOCIETY.

MY DEAR —,

 AS politeness of manner and address are things which can be appreciated by the many, while learning and scholarship can only be estimated by the few, it is as well, even in a university, to pay some attention to those external accomplishments which adorn every day life; and add so much to the pleasures of social intercourse. I trust that I have

already pointed out to you sufficient reasons for a proper application to the great objects of Academical Education; and that you will not be tempted to let the elegancies of society interfere with its essentials; but as urbanity and refinement of address are a sort of flag of truce held out to your fellow creatures, announcing your obligations to them, and shewing your intention to treat all with due regard; some time may be taken from the more uncompromising inquiry of what men have been or ought to be, to be spent in the lighter study of what they are.

I may be allowed some excuse for my anxiety on this point, because I recollect that Oxford is at least half a century behind the world. Essentially Tory, she disdains that change of manners, that social reformation, which marks the progress of civilization all over the globe.

She would be more truly conservative by keeping time with society, by encouraging, if not instructing her youth in some modern advantages of manners, and by discouraging practices which are elsewhere obsolete, and should have become so there. True conservatism holds its place by moving: for if you stand still, while all around is advancing, in a few years, you will appear to have gone back.

You will have observed, I trust, with pain, that amongst your present companions there is a neglect of that inclination to oblige, (excepting from impulse) and a want of that tact or sense of fashionable propriety, which we call good breeding. Or if any be found so hardy (for some few there must be) as to have leavened their *fortiter in re* with a little of the *suaviter in modo*, they are the butt and ridicule of their companions.

I am well aware that eventually, by

a due admixture with the world, men of most refined manners, grafted upon the most elegant scholarship, do claim Oxford or Cambridge as their alma mater: but I am yet to learn that an earlier attention to these points would have made them less profound, or have had any ill effect upon the body of students of either university. It is true that we pardon the want of urbanity so general amongst you, on account of the many great excellencies which do exist; much in the same manner as we should excuse the eccentricity of some very learned or worthy individual: but we cannot allow that it strengthens your cause any more than it makes him a more agreeable member of society. There are some in the world who have found their account in a hard and unpolished manner, whose bearishness has even given them a fictitious celebrity for talent; but they are the exceptions: and

the same rule is inapplicable to bodies of men, with whom such a course is rather calculated to diminish the lustre of real excellence.

Notwithstanding my strong convictions on this point, I fear to ask you to follow my advice. Until you have attained some great degree of influence in your set, the probability of reforming a body of thoughtless young men would be very distant; and the temporary inconvenience to yourself very great. In any other part of the world, I should tell you that politeness or even elegance of manner, with certain current bodily accomplishments, would render you a general favourite, and be a passport to society. If I told you so now, I should mislead you. If you wish to be noticed favourably, notice nobody with ordinary politeness; the more you think of yourself, the more you will be thought of. On Monday

Evening you may pass two hours agreeably with a cotemporary in the room of a mutual acquaintance; on Tuesday morning you must pass him in High Street with a most decided cut, if you wish him to court your society. What would have made an enemy of him in Bond Street, or at St. James's, will there make him an esteemed friend. You would naturally expect that the change of a riding coat and your bespattered boots before you rushed into Hall, or to the dessert table of your fellow collegian, would have created a favourable impression, and stamped you, a freshman, as a person accustomed to the decencies of society. On the contrary it will be regarded as a mark of absurd affectation, and be visited accordingly with unmitigated ridicule or contempt. Not that Oxford men dress badly, or admire it in others; I never knew better dressed men anywhere;

but then it is in their own way : and the refinements of modern life are left to shift for themselves, until they are emancipated from this isolated world of their own. If the pedantry of conversation as defined by Mackenzie, proceeds beyond the ordinary meaning of the word, and consists in the intrusion of your own subjects, to the exclusion of others ; then an Oxford wine party is the quintessence of vulgar pedantry : and while one roars out his exploits in the hunting field, and another his over the bottle, a third is less loud, but not less determined in his exposition of a disputed passage. If you neither read, drink, nor ride, you will be inexpressibly bored ; but the perception of your dilemma, or the introduction of any subject more interesting to yourself, is as little to be hoped for, as that Ibrahim Pacha should have disposed of his harem, before he paid a visit to the Queen

of England. All this may and does often proceed from a thoughtlessness natural to high spirits and youth ; but is not on that account the more defensible on the score of politeness.

Of course you will find some exceptions to this general impracticability as regards manner ; *cæteris paribus*, cultivate their acquaintance ; while, in the truly worthy, you must be prepared to sacrifice something to their peculiarities : my lessons are otherwise thrown away. But beyond the mere question of external refinement, there are faults which, having been long discarded from the list of *fashionable* vices, still meet with some degree of encouragement in our universities. Our glorious old forefathers, as they called themselves, would as soon have thought of going to bed sober, as of effecting any other alteration in their manner of living. Drunkenness was the vice of their Coun-



try, and patriotism was a strong feature in their character. But you, my dear ——, live in other days; and it is melancholy to believe that when Temperance set her seal upon the rest of this happy island, Oxford and Cambridge should alone have resisted her influence.

“ Reges dicuntur multis urgere culullis  
Et torquere mero, quem perpexisse laborent,  
An sit amicitia dignus.” HOR : Ars poet. 434.

The virtue that requires to be warmed by wine is of questionable excellence: scarcely worth discovering. To point out the degradation and evils of this vice, is not the province of a letter; for I have every reason to suppose that you know, and will avoid them: I mention it because unhappily our universities have not discarded it, as society has done. There only, where last it should be seen, is it ever talked of: talked of too often with a lightness which makes the world ima-

gine that they glory in it: and that it is thus the most incurable of their faults. Books might be written on its consequences, but I conclude with the words of a writer on the subject, who, after enumerating its manifest deformity, adds, "it has also a bad influence on our *sober* moments, as it insensibly weakens the understanding, impairs the memory, and makes those faults habitual which are produced by frequent excesses."

Believe me, my dear ——,

Yours most affectionately,


C. C.



## LETTER VIII.

ON THE STUDY OF THE ANTIENTS AND  
MODERNS. A WORD ON RE-  
LIGIOUS DUTY.

MY DEAR —,

 ONE of the grounds of complaint, on the part of objectors to our present system of education, is the *length of time* occupied in acquiring that which is for practical purposes useless: the slowness with which a knowledge of the dead languages is obtained. But not to argue the question of their utility, which has been ably done by many wri-

ters, I cannot but believe that this very objection is an advantage in itself. For when we consider that it prevents the mind from becoming, as it were, loaded with very weighty matter, giving so much leisure and opportunity for the comparison of facts and characters, which could not be the case without its constructive difficulties, it appears like a great excellence in our system of education. That this is really the case, we have a great proof in the fact, that generally speaking, the circumstances of modern History, learnt either in our own language or in one easily acquired, are not known or understood with that distinctness peculiar to Classical lore. In the minds of persons ordinarily educated, mistakes as to dates, facts, or characters, are but too common. The early history of France, or even England, with all the distinctive characteristics of their monarchs, statesmen, and

writers, are massed together, and jumbled in the heads of moderately instructed persons: the incidents of the reign of Louis XI. and the times of the Earl of Warwick, are allowed to intermingle with those of Louis XII or Henry VIII: while the lowest boy in the fifth form of a public school, or the most moderately gifted scholar has a clear notion of the peculiar characteristics of the Kings of Greece, and the incidents which marked the reigns of the Cæsars. This arises I believe, from the very slowness with which that knowledge is acquired; and if it were possible to place the same difficulties in the way of the student of the French or English Language, we should doubtless find the same retention of facts, and comparison of circumstances. This knowledge moreover never entirely deserts the man classically educated; for after long years, the most trifling appli-

cation will recall it: whilst a living language, to say nothing of its literature, is forgotten in a few years, and requires to be relearnt. If we add to these circumstances, that the difficulties of the classics in our earliest years, will make the acquirement of modern literature comparatively light at a later period of life, we must conclude that the employment of even a quarter of a century, in the acquisition of the dead languages is of infinite advantage to permanent success.

You know, my dear ——, how strongly I advocate a moderate attention to the accomplishments of the person in dress, and manner; how anxious I am that you should avoid any awkwardness of dress or person for the sake of even Scholarlike rigidity, if you will; believing that you sacrifice no claim to respect as a man of learning, by some pretension to be thought a gentleman. Herodotus has left us a

practical allegory by dedicating the labours of historical research to the muses. I am equally desirous that you should graft a knowledge of modern literature and language upon those studies which are now peculiarly your care. You will read with pleasure the diffuse but elegant disquisitions of the French school on classical literature, and compare it with the more learned and profound criticisms of the German: besides fitting yourself for the current tone of polite society when you leave the university. In these days of locomotion, when you may visit almost every capital of Europe, with more ease than you could formerly have reached Paris, you will not underrate the value of modern acquirements; and reflect that devotion to the studies of the cloister should be regulated by the necessity for devotion to the cloister itself. I must ever think that a little more attention to

these matters on the part of the University would be attended with beneficial results, not only to science, but to the solution of some of the mysteries of Academical learning.

In concluding this letter, we must bear in mind the peculiar nature and origin of the Sister Universities. You are accustomed to consider them as nurseries of only classical learning; but you must remember, that that learning is grafted on, or rather springing from their peculiarly religious character: and when esteem for them is founded upon any other grounds, they have not exerted their influence as they ought. It was a feeling of religion in an age not perhaps more strongly, but certainly more generally, imbued with religious veneration than our own; in an age when worship formed a portion of every day life, and was not left for the high days and holidays only; which



raised those colleges for the better appreciation and advancement of the faith: and independently of all higher considerations you should remember your obligations to Oxford on that account. But for religion the learning which you justly prize so highly, and much of the civilization which benefits you in your social position, would have been confined to a profession: our universities would never have existed, or existed only without those privileges which they now claim as their own. Never therefore permit yourself to look upon attendance on your College Chapel as a mere form: nor treat with any coldness, the other services of your public worship. You will be led unfortunately to believe that it is a matter of mere outward observance, by seeing the easy transition from a scene of noise and riot, to a place intended for devotion; and there may not be many examples of higher motive than

to make up a certain number of necessary attendances: but it is neither the intention of the university that it should be so regarded, nor the spirit of a Christian that looks upon it in so mean a light. If some apology for such a notion could be found, it could only be for the low and ignorant; surely not for those educated in the very precincts of Humanity and Religion. But this is no subject for a short and unstudied letter. Adieu then. Make the Religious Institutions of the university your study and care, and believe the wish of Helenus to be the prayer of your most sincere friend:

“ Hunc socii morem sacrorum, hunc ipse teneto:  
Hâc casti maneant in religione nepotes.”

VIRG. *Æn.* iii. 408.

CHARLES CLARKE.

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